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ABSTRACT

A study undertaken in China investigated the attitudes of 512 students of English as a Second Language, aged 18-52, in 15 colleges and universities. A two-part, semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire, was administered in 1988 and 1989. The first part, the Chinese Values Survey, was designed to examine cultural values from an Eastern rather than a Western perspective. Responses were analyzed at three levels: group (culture); demographic (student characteristics such as age, gender, and major); and individual. The second part, a questionnaire on attitudes toward English language learning and teaching, was offered in both English and Chinese. Results indicate the students rank knowledge (education), trustworthiness, and self-cultivation above other values. Attributes least valued include having few desires, being non-competitive, moderation, and being conservative. Subjects ranked the four language skills in this descending order of confidence: reading, speaking, listening, and writing. Study methods found most popular and perceived as most effective included practice, use, independent study, reading, listening, and memorization. Students' opportunities for English use outside the classroom, anticipated future use of the language, and skill areas needing improvement most were also investigated. Variations in response according to gender, age, and major are examined and additional information gathered from open-ended responses is discussed. (MSE)

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Preferences and Pet Peeves of Chinese College Students

Preparing to go abroad to teach, novice and experienced teachers alike are full of questions: "What will these new students be like? Will they remind me of former students, or will they be quite different from anyone I've taught before?" When native speakers of English go abroad to teach, they face hundreds of new faces at once in new classes, an experience that may be daunting even to the experienced. In The King and I (1951), Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, II write about Mrs. Anna Leonowens, a British teacher of English to the royal children of Siam (Thailand) more than a century ago. The attitude which Mrs. Anna expresses in song is worthy of emulation by others who find themselves in similar situations: (She sings)

It's a very ancient saying,
But a true and honest thought,
That "if you become a teacher,
By your pupils you'll be taught."

She goes on to sing:

Getting to know you,
Getting to know all about you,
Getting to like you,
Getting to hope you like me.
Getting to know you---

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June Rose Garrott

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(New York: Random House: 39-40)

No single study--no battery of tests--can ever reveal "all about" any person or any group of people. Nevertheless, foreign teachers would do well to let themselves be taught by their students. A large number of learner characteristics can be illuminated by knowledge of what learners consider most important, of what learners prize--or despise.

Statement of the Problem and Approach to the Problem

In order to identify as fully as possible the characteristics of Chinese college students of English whom foreign teachers of English are likely to encounter in typical Chinese classrooms, an anonymous two-part descriptive survey of cultural values and of attitudes toward English-language learning and teaching was administered to 512 men and women ranging in age from 18 to 52. Cooperating teachers in fifteen colleges or universities in Shanghai, Beijing, and nine provinces administered the semi-structured and open-ended questionnaire during regular class periods in the spring of 1988 and the spring of 1989.

Instrumentation

Part One--the Chinese Values Survey (CVS)--was developed by the Chinese Culture Connection specifically to investigate cultural values from an Eastern perspective rather than from a Western perspective (1987). Forty terms or phrases compose the values instrument. At the time that the writer's research was carried out in China, the Chinese Values Survey (CVS) had been administered and analyzed only at the culture, or group, level in 22 countries around the world--but NOT in China. Garrott data were analyzed at three levels: (1) that of the group, or culture, (2) that

according to demographics of gender, age, and major field of the respondents, and (3) that of the individual. The CVS traditional Chinese characters used worldwide except in China were transcribed into the simplified characters used in mainland China. The values survey was then administered only in Chinese.

Part Two--the Garrott questionnaire on student attitudes toward English-language learning and teaching--was developed specifically to investigate English-language programs in China from the perspective of students rather than from the perspective of teachers, curriculum designers, or administrators. A one-page questionnaire of demographics and 9 questions regarding student attitudes toward various aspects of English-language study was formulated. All questions appear both in Chinese and in English, and students were invited to respond in either language. Demographics and questions 1 and 2 are semi-structured, while questions 3 through 9 are open-ended. Questions are phrased conversationally, in non-technical terms, and the use of open-ended questions elicits genuine student opinion, as well as allaying suspicion that the researcher is hoping to draw out any particular answer.

Background

A few remarks on the background of English-language study in China can illuminate the context of the present research.

After a long civil war in China, in 1949 Chinese Nationalist forces and sympathizers settled in Taiwan, in Hong Kong, and in other parts of the world. New China was established according to Communist ideology on the Chinese mainland, and foreigners were forced to leave the country. Prior to 1978, for an unsettled, chaotic period of almost thirty years, Western influence in China was extremely limited. Even when schools were able to operate, English-language courses were not offered. All books written in English were ordered to be destroyed, and anyone caught speaking English was severely punished.

Beginning in 1978 with the implementation of an "Open Door Policy," English-language study was once more not only permitted but also encouraged in China. Though English-language study in 1978 was not absolutely new to the nation of China, it was absolutely new to millions of Chinese students. Beginning in the late 1970s, native speakers of languages other than Chinese were once more invited to teach in China. At Beijing's Second Foreign Language Institute, for example, native speakers of French, German, Japanese, and Russian lived on campus in the faculty guest house alongside native speakers of English from Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and the United States.

As English was recognized by the Chinese as the modern world's international language, and as China was eager to join the ranks of modern world nations, the government of China invited professional educators from English-speaking countries to help re-establish English-study programs. Students who participated in 1988 & 1989 in the research being reported on were evaluating their ten-year experience with those programs begun in 1978.

Motivation for the Study

Both parts of the two-part survey were designed, distributed, collected, and analyzed in response to specific challenges--the values survey in response to a challenge from the field of Social Psychology, the questionnaire in response to a challenge from the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

The CVS: In an article titled "Chinese Personality and Its Change," which appears in a work called The Psychology of the Chinese People, Yang Kuoshu devotes a lengthy section to a discussion of research into college students' values which Charles Morris carried out in China in 1948 and later reported on in a book titled Varieties of Human Value (1956). Writing on Chinese personality and its change in 1986, Yang has this to say:

In order to obtain a better picture of such [values] preferences in Chinese students, more representative samples should be tested in typical Chinese societies. While no such research has been possible in mainland China since 1948, several studies have been completed in Taiwan. (119)

In 1988 and 1989, at the end of a decade of comparative openness to Western theories and practices and immediately preceding another period of severe Chinese governmental restrictions, cross-sectional psychological research into student values in China was possible.

The Garrott Questionnaire: In October 1987, the Symposium on Intensive English Training in China (SIETIC) was held at Beijing's Second Foreign Language Institute. Many of the participants of the Symposium were well-known figures from the fields of Applied Linguistics and EFL teaching, persons from throughout the English-speaking world who had been instrumental in helping China re-establish English-study programs after 1978. The purpose of the Symposium was to evaluate intensive English programs at the end of the first decade of their existence and to project programs for the second decade.

At the conclusion of the conference, Peter Strevens--representing the Bell Educational Laboratories and speaking on behalf of several concluding panelists--extended essentially the following challenge:

For two very intensive days, we Chinese and international professional educators have reviewed intensive English-language programs in China, have shared our disappointments, have congratulated each other and ourselves on our accomplishments, and have laid the groundwork for future improvements.

However, one vital part of this assessment process is conspicuous by its absence: What do students think about these program? What are their disappointments? What do they feel good about? What improvements would they like to see implemented?

We teachers and administrators do not know the answers to these questions. We need to ask the students what they think about their English-study programs, and we need to listen to their answers.

Response to the Challenges

Having taught English as a Foreign Expert in Shanghai for one year (1985-1986) and in Beijing for two years (1986-1988), by the Spring of 1988 the researcher was in a position from which

to solicit cooperation for the broad administration of a survey of college students' values and of their attitudes toward English-language learning and teaching.

Population

Persons (512) taking part in the survey range in age from 18 to 52, a range that normally would cover two biological generations. However, three quite distinct educational generations fall within that 34-year span:

New Generation. Approximately 340 students are between the ages of 18 and 23 in 1988 and 1989. Born between 1966 and 1971, they began attending primary school between 1972 and 1977 and probably received an uninterrupted, fairly normal primary- and secondary-school education. When the so-called Cultural Revolution came to an end in 1976, they were between the ages of 5 and 10 and could scarcely have taken part in political activities.

Middle Generation. Approximately 120 persons between the ages of 24 and 35 in 1988-1989 were born between 1954 and 1966. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, they were between the ages of 1 and 14. Because of the Cultural Revolution, their educational opportunities were severely limited. Most of the 120 are either graduate students of English or young teachers of English.

"Lost" Generation. Approximately 35 students between the ages of 36 and 52 would have been born between 1936 and 1954. Consequently, at the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, they were between the ages of 12 and 30. They would have been deeply and actively involved in the Cultural Revolution. Younger ones probably were Red Guards; older ones may have been branded as intellectuals and sent to the countryside for "re-education." Either way, they lost their opportunity for a normal college education when colleges and universities shut down completely for almost five years--between mid-1966 and some time in 1971.

Population Sub-groups

Even though three distinct educational generations respond to the values survey and attitudes survey, the data file split according to age features only one category labeled "younger" (the "new" generation--18 to 23) (340 students) and another labeled "older" (the middle and "lost" generations--24 to 52) (172 students). Regarding gender, males and females appear in equal distribution. Whereas students record forty-two major fields--ranging from English majors to agriculturalists to medical specialists to bee-keepers--the data file is split simply according to English majors and non-English majors.

Cooperating Colleagues

Twenty-four teachers of English in China cooperated by administering, collecting, and returning class sets of survey responses. Six teachers were Chinese; fourteen were citizens of the

United States; one was Chinese-American; one was Australian; one, Canadian; and one, a Netherlander.

Cooperating Institutions

Fifteen colleges or universities in Shanghai, Beijing, and nine provinces permitted their students to take part in the survey: three foreign language institutes, three regional universities, two agricultural colleges, two teachers' colleges, one polytechnic institute, one institute of mechanical engineering, one college of coal and economics, one medical university, and one "key" university--Peking University.

Student Demographics

Though class sets of survey responses come from Shanghai, Beijing, and nine provinces, among the 512 respondents every one of China's 22 provinces, all 3 municipalities, and all 5 autonomous regions are represented.

Generalizability

Approximately one-half of one percent of China's 1.13 billion people attend college. Virtually all Chinese college students study English. Therefore, data analyzed in the research under consideration should be generalizable to one-half of one percent of 1.13 billion people.

Data Entry and Print-out

Quantified data generated from descriptive analysis recorded in a code book were entered into the Excel program for the Macintosh system. The Excel file was then transferred onto SPSS, Version 4, for Macintosh. The SPSS file of codified data was printed out on an Image Writer, which produced 341 pages of descriptive statistical data: "File contains 90 variables, 720 bytes per case before compression: 512 cases saved." As quantitative data were generated from qualitative perceptions, 46,080 cells of information on Chinese college students' values and attitudes represent a data base which Morris could scarcely have envisioned in 1948.

Chi-square statistics were obtained for gender, age, and major field for the questions regarding greatest and least confidence and comfort in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English. T-tests were performed on items of the Chinese Values Survey.

I. Preferences: Chinese Values Survey

Three values top the Preferences List. Not surprisingly, 512 Chinese college students of English in a variety of colleges and universities scattered throughout China place highest value on knowledge, or education. Whereas students of both sexes, all ages, and all major fields prize education highly, t-tests show that females grade education even higher than do males. Students rank Trustworthiness second in importance among the 40 values items. Whether students themselves endeavor to be trustworthy or whether they simply appreciate the virtue in others cannot be determined

from these data. A decided preference for self-cultivation appears, as self-cultivation ranks third. Females, younger students, and English majors place even greater importance on self-cultivation than do others.

II. Pet Peeves: Chinese Values Survey

Four values that fall at the very last among the values items reveal a great deal about student attitudes toward Chinese society in 1988 and 1989: Having Few Desires, Non-Competitiveness, Moderation, and Being Conservative. That is, as Having Few Desires and Non-Competitiveness are rated as least important by students, they obviously consider having many desires and being competitive as very important. Males value competitiveness even more highly than do females. Equally clearly, contemporary Chinese college students of English disdain the concepts of Moderation and Being Conservative. Though no one considers Moderation as important, English majors are the very least interested in Moderation, in following the middle way. Regarding Being Conservative, 43 percent say, "Being conservative is of no importance to me."

Valuation by Major Field

According to the t-test analysis of the 40 cultural values items, English majors predominate at 5: Self-cultivation; Having a close, intimate friend; Chastity in women; Observance of rites and social rituals; and A sense of cultural superiority.

Values Summary

Descriptive statistics and t-tests show what percentages do at the group or demographic level; they cannot reveal what individual students think. Verbatim student comments complement quantitative data, as students tell quite candidly just what they think about English-language learning and teaching in China.

III. Preferences: Four Skills

Regarding questions of greatest and least confidence in the four English skills areas, students rank the four skills in the following order for Most confidence and comfort: Reading, speaking, listening, and writing. Fifty-two percent of all students report feeling most confident and comfortable when reading English. The second-highest ranked skill, Speaking, involves only 26 percent of the students.

Two kinds of important information emerge from these data. First, chi-square statistics show that older students and non-English majors report feeling more confident and comfortable reading English than do younger and English majors. However, also important is the fact that large numbers of students across the board and within all categories report feeling both confident and comfortable when reading English.

A likely explanation for this decided preference for reading lies in the fact that older students and non-English majors have studied English chiefly from textbooks. Moreover, reciting textbooks--

even to the point of memorizing them--is standard operating procedure for Chinese students of all ages. Therefore, students may quite understandably feel both confident and comfortable in doing something they do so frequently.

Furthermore, as wisdom and knowledge are thought to reside between book covers, students who value knowledge and self-cultivation so highly as do those in this study may well consider reading as the best way to gain knowledge for themselves by themselves.

Only 26 percent of the students report feeling most confident and comfortable when speaking English, though speaking ranks second among the four skills. In other words, twice as many students feel most confident and comfortable reading as those at the next level, speaking. Differences between the other skills in ranking are minimal. Chi-square statistics show that younger students report preferences for speaking more frequently than do older ones. When the number of years the younger group has studied English is taken into account, and when younger students' relatively greater opportunities for speaking English outside the classroom are considered, the statistically significant difference between younger and older students' reported confidence and comfort in speaking English is easily accounted for.

Combination of the two highest ranked skills shows that 78 percent of all responses list either reading or speaking as areas of greatest confidence and comfort. Only 20 percent prefer listening, while a scant 15 percent prefer writing.

Students, then, prefer reading by far, then speaking, then listening and writing. The ranking probably reflects the extent of students' personal experiences with and use of English. They read English from their first day in class. They recite English from the very beginning, too, which is a form of speaking (thought not of communicating). In many instances, speaking and listening complement each other.

Writing, on the other hand, is in a class by itself--foreign at any age or stage. Reading is clearly a preference; writing, an equally clear pet peeve.

IV. Pet Peeves: Four Skills

Asked, "In which aspect of English--reading, writing, listening, or speaking--do you feel least confident and comfortable?" 49 percent of the students report feeling least confident and comfortable in writing English. Students rank the four skills at dis-comfort level as writing, listening, reading, speaking. Moreover, chi-square analysis shows that more of the older students are troubled by writing than the younger students. Reasons that writing constitutes a pet peeve for so many students are not hard to find.

Quite frequently, even though students may have studied English for ten years or more, they will not have done any writing whatsoever until they first study composition with a native speaker of English. Chinese middle-school teachers of English, for the most part, have never themselves written in English and, as a consequence, seldom attempt to teach their students to do so. As the college

entrance examination system in China does not call for the writing of coherent, unified paragraphs in English, writing receives short shrift in Chinese high schools.

Students will have set out word-for-word English translations of Chinese, and they may have copied passages in English from purportedly fine models of writing. They will have attended lectures on writing, and they may even have read quite a bit about writing. But they rarely will ever have done any actual writing.

With dismay, the researcher learned during the first class period with third-year students of English at Beijing's Second Foreign Language Institute that they had studied the composition textbook for the whole year as sophomores--had studied it in their Intensive Reading class without ever having picked up a pen. Not surprisingly, they were thoroughly sick of the writing text long before they even met the teacher assigned to instruct them in writing. As a matter of fact, that particular textbook does not even suggest that students write. Compiled by Chinese in China, in only three places in the entire book are students advised to "think about writing." At second place, 23 percent of the students report feeling least confident and comfortable when listening to English. That is, more than double the number of students feel least confident and comfortable in writing English as do those at the next level, listening. Combination of the two highest ranking skills on the dis-comfort scale shows that 72 percent of the students find writing or listening to be pet peeves.

Students are not shy about expressing their opinions--both positive and negative: (1) "Reading is dry," (2) "I don't like writing," (3) "Writing is most difficult, but I like it," (4) "Intensive Reading makes me nauseous."

V. Preferences: Personal Most Effective Study Methods

Six popular methods emerge for personal most effective approaches to language learning: practice, use, self-study, reading, listening, and memorization. Thirty-five percent of the group name reading as their most effective study method. Males and females value reading almost equally, but more of the younger students than the older favor reading. Among English majors, 41 percent say that reading is their most effective method, but only 26 percent of the non-English majors cite reading. Differences in esteem for reading may reflect differences in students' purposes for studying English: younger and English majors need to absorb and retain great amounts of information in English and about English in order to do well on their own examinations and in order to teach English in the future. Older and non-English majors, on the other hand, probably are more interested in learning to communicate in English. Therefore, a strong vote for reading may reflect a bent toward "book learning."

Practice is mentioned by 19 percent of the students as their most effective study method; use is cited by another 14 percent. Students who mention use and practice may be thinking of the same concept. However, practice can be carried out alone, whereas use--of necessity--involves at least one other person.

MORE

A separate paper might be written concerning the idea of "more," as Chinese students relate it to language study: (1) "More practice makes more progress," (2) "I don't think study efforts of my own were too important to my English study. Much more time is necessary," (3) "Read more, speak more, write more and listen more." Even when the word "more" is not used, the notion pervades responses: (1) "Read, read, and read," (2) "Speak, speak, and speak."

Teachers

Frequently, students refer to teachers when commenting on their own most effective study methods: "Under the help of a real English teacher." Nor are their reflections always happy ones:

I have not any good or bad method to learn English, because
I learn English after teacher. Teachers let me read or write,
I do it, I never think method about English. I don't like English.
It's only because my future's job. (a woman of 21, in a teacher's college)

Memorization

If these raw data were musical compositions instead of questionnaire responses, memorizing would surely be a leit motif: (1) "Connecting, comparing, memorizing," (2) "Memorizing, copying dictionaries," (3) "Learn the text by heart," (4) "First, understand, secondly, memorize, then read." These individual student comments about preferred study methods reveal much, also, about student attitudes toward English-language learning and teaching.

VI. Pet Peeves: Personal Least Effective Study Methods

Asked to comment on their least effective study methods, students unexpectedly decide to use the question as an opportunity to vent their frustrations over their language-learning situations. In the process, a vivid picture of contemporary Chinese education emerges, one painted by artists most familiar with the terrain--the students themselves.

In listing what they consider least effective, students reveal what they have tried or what has been imposed upon them: (1) "Deadly memorizing without understanding," (2) "Memorizing dictionary," (3) "Memorize thousands of words but I still can't use them idiomatically." Many students project their linguistic difficulties onto their language teachers: (1) "Teacher-centered method is the least effective," (2) "Teacher's speak all the time in the class, leaving no chance for me to practice," (3) "The teacher fills me up like an old vinegar bottle," (4) "In the whole class we study the same thing without any humor and activity."

Motivation

A number of students use the question about personal least effective study method as an impetus to reflect on motivation in language study: (1) "Without motive, no method is effective," (2) "When I don't want to study, nobody can make me learn something," (3) "I was simply too shy to open my mouth."

Indomitable Spirits

Other students exemplify motivation, simply refusing to admit the existence of a "least effective" study method: (1) "All of my study methods are effective, (2) "Actually, I don't think my methods of study are least effective as long as I stick to them."

VII. Preferences: Most Helpful Teaching Methods or Class Activities

Students are asked, in English and Chinese, "As you think back over your English study time, which teacher-directed activities have you found most helpful?" Preferences appear for three methods: (1) 22 percent cite "class participation," (2) 21 percent cite "meaningful explanation," and (3) 17 percent mention "elicitation method." Elicitation is sometimes called "thought-provoking teaching," or "Socratic method"--asking real questions that encourage students to think and to respond thoughtfully.

Traditional Methods

For centuries, teacher autonomy went unquestioned in China. Students listened while teachers lectured, learned what teachers laid out. Older students might be expected to feel more comfortable when teachers and students maintain traditional roles. However, a number of younger students say that they find traditional approaches most helpful: (1) "The teacher point at our mistakes," (2) "Ask us to recite some useful drills and sentences," (3) "To do more exercises."

Student Autonomy

Though the Chinese have a reputation for indirectness, some respondents come right to the point: (1) "Take students as the center of class activities," (2) "Make the dull things into interesting things."

Classroom Interaction

Rather than sitting in class listening passively as teachers lecture, most students would prefer to take a more active role in their language learning: (1) "The way teachers give students the key to find the answers themselves," (2) "Teacher teach us like friend to friend," (3) "To be taught in easy, friendly atmosphere is most helpful."

Elicitation

Most students like to think, though very rarely are they asked to think in traditional classrooms: (1) "Arouse my interests and concentrate my attention by raising questions," (2) "Elicitation method," (3) "Independently-thinking way."

Meaningful Content

Participation creates interest; interest encourages participation--a happy learning-teaching loop:

(1) "Teachers give us lots of interesting materials, give us chances to read and think, then communicate with us about comments. This way is most helpful," (2) "Lead us to focus on the ideas of the text, not on the grammar point."

Interaction

Students prefer interrelated studies and methods: (1) "Use different methods for different students," (2) "Active atmosphere and interesting topic. Several things in one lesson," (3) "I think the most important thing for teachers is to arouse the students' interest. The teacher'd teach students by reading, writing, listening and speaking at the same time, not just grammar."

Whereas some learners prefer traditional methods, most students prefer more recent approaches to language study. Lively comments on the questionnaire reflect lively interest in active language learning and teaching.

VIII. Opportunities for English Use Outside the Classroom

Sixteen percent of all students report that they have no opportunity at all to use English outside of the classroom setting. This means that, oftentimes, younger students and English majors are just as limited in opportunities for English use as older students and non-English majors. Two English majors studying in a language institute in Beijing, the capital city of China, express their frustration in these words: (1) "I have not got any," and (2)

We have hardly any opportunity to use English except
chatting with my schoolmates. Seldom, we meet
foreigners and exchange our thoughts and ideas, but
they're too many rules forbid us.

Another 31 percent of the students say that they have "few" opportunities. Taken together, 47 percent of the students say they have no opportunities or few opportunities to use English outside of the classroom.

Thirteen percent say that reading English is their chief way to use English when they are not in school. The following woman is typical: "Reading by myself, listening to the radio are the two usual ways of using English."

If English majors studying in the nation's capital city report very limited opportunities for English use away from school, how much more limited must be those who try to learn English in smaller cities or rural areas.

IX. English Use in the Future

Asked, "How do you plan to use English after you complete formal study?" 23 percent of the responses are vague, and 52 percent simply state "in my work"--scarcely a model of specificity. In other words, a full 75 percent of Chinese college students of English give no clear answer to the question, "How do you plan to use English after you complete formal study?"

Planning

Once more, many students decide to use the question as an opportunity to vent their frustrations: (1) "I cannot plan because I don't know what I will do after graduation," (2) "No choice in how to use English myself."

Preferences

A very few students indicate concrete plans. Here are four who have definite ideas: (1) "To introduce English poetry to China," (2) "In order to make full use of my study, I want to engage in translation, I think that is the only purpose in studying foreign language," (3) "I'd like to use my English for teaching Americans Chinese," (4) "I want to speak English rather than read and write all day long. Thus, I want to be an interpreter or a tour guide."

Pet Peeves

Responding to the question about English use in the future, most English majors express negative emotions: (1) "I have to be English teacher, but I like interpreter best," (2) "My cruel fate make me to be an English teacher. In the future, maybe I only can teach what I learn to my middle school students," (3) "Actually, I didn't think this problem seriously before, but I am anxious to be an active reporter or an interpreter. If the worst comes, I may be a teacher."

More Preferences

Some students are challenged positively by their English-language study: (1) "I want to be a tour guide or do anything concerned with English. I love English," (2) "To be a good English teacher," (3) "I'll be a English teacher, so I'll use it to teach my students well."

A very mild question--"How do you plan to use English after you complete formal study?"--triggers many highly charged answers that convey a great deal about characteristics of Chinese learners and about the context of English-language study in China.

X. Pet Peeves: Greatest Needed Improvement

Eighteen percent of all students call for more chances to practice what they have learned, and another 11 percent use the precise phrase "listening and speaking." In effect, 30 percent of 512 language learners say they feel most handicapped by their lack of opportunity either to hear or to speak English.

Judgmental Attitudes

Some students are quite blunt regarding what they see as the greatest needed improvement for English-language learning and teaching: (1) "Keep out of those idle teachers," (2) "Some teachers' English is very poor. Such teachers should be sacked."

Materials and Texts

Students would prefer improved teaching materials: (1) "Chinese students are short of flexibility, so textbooks should be improved," (2) "Some textbooks should be improved. They can choose much more interesting articles instead of dull ones."

Summary

Thus 512 representative Chinese college students have registered their candid opinions, their likes and dislikes, their preferences and pet peeves regarding 40 cultural values and regarding English-language learning and teaching in China.

In summary, a comparison can be made between Morris's earlier findings on Chinese college students' values and findings of this study.

Morris's Varieties of Human Value

Summarizing the characteristics of students taking part in his 1948 survey research in China, Morris has this to say:

The values pattern of the Chinese young people, as it appears in this study, is actively and socially oriented to an extreme degree and hence is antithetic to those modes of life directed primarily toward the self or toward nature. Yet the temper is not ascetic or grim but warmly human. While there is hardly a trace of a demanding possessive self, there is some evidence that the ancient Chinese stress on the cultivation of the self was still a living force. (1956: 60)

Whereas Morris finds his students to be "antithetic to those modes of life directed primarily toward the self," Self-cultivation ranks at a very high 3 among results recorded by contemporary students. Other values prized by respondents in the study under consideration--such as Knowledge (Education), Trustworthiness, Persistence, Sincerity, and so forth--concern individual orientation rather than group orientation. Contemporary Chinese college students are individualists to a much greater extent than were Chinese college students in 1948. Moreover, t-tests on the values survey demonstrate statistically significant differences at 23 points according to perceptions registered by gender, age, and/or major field of the respondents.

As for the questionnaire on attitudes toward English study, both descriptive statistics and chi-square procedures show that males and females, younger and older students, English majors and non-English majors do--quite literally--inhabit different perceptual worlds. In short, college students

whom teachers of English as a foreign language are likely to encounter in typical Chinese classrooms are characterized chiefly by great diversity and complexity.

These students clearly call for more active and interactive language learning and teaching; they reject many aspects of traditional study; and they call for modification of other traditional methods. A few brief implications for language teaching can be drawn in conclusion.

Suggestions for Pedagogy

First, given such diversity and complexity of learners, even if someone were to develop and promote "the one best way" to learn a foreign language, that method probably would be prized by some students but despised by others. Learning style preferences reported by respondents in this study parallel virtually every method, every technique, and every strategy mentioned by theorists in the field of language acquisition.

No new methods, techniques, or strategies for language learning are mentioned by contemporary Chinese college students of English; no culturally specific approaches emerge. These findings suggest that effective learning methods may be universal but that individuals and groups differ in the extent to which certain methods are valued and emphasized. That is, emphasis--not method--may be culturally specific.

For example, though all language learning involves memorization to some extent, those societies in which memorization and recitation are prized will probably emphasize memory work more so than societies which lack such a tradition. Because Chinese learners will memorize, will recite, will read, teachers of English as a foreign language may properly and profitably consider appropriate ways to integrate memorization, recitation, and reading into the curriculum.

Students declare in the attitudes questionnaire that they prefer classes that are "more interesting." However, given the diversity represented in any given classroom, what strikes some students as delightful may strike others as deplorable. In such a case, a variety of carefully chosen methods seems advisable. Strevens speaks of an eclecticism that contributes to "informed teaching." Such eclecticism respects the learners and is a vital component of what Rivers (1987) calls "interactive language teaching." That is, when teachers employ variety in classroom activities, in homework assignments, and in examinations, learners understand that if their preferences are not catered to for one day--or for one week--their tuñ will come soon.

Second, gender and age appear to be crucial factors. The fact that females predominate over males in 8 out of 9 places where sex is of statistical significance may reflect the fact that China remains a male-dominated society. Females in this study may predominate over males simply because their opinions were solicited in writing. They may have feared that their spoken opinions would not have been so well received. Also, more of the female English majors will probably become English teachers than will male English majors. Strongly expressed feelings from females, therefore, may reflect their dread of life as an English teacher.

Sensitive, informed teachers need to lead classroom discussion so that men and women feel equally at ease in speaking up and speaking out. One way to facilitate such an atmosphere is to plan meaningful activities--those of such inherent interest that students forget their discomfort at speaking because they are eager to express their own opinions and to listen respectfully to the opinions of others.

Not all implications to be drawn from findings in this study can be applied so positively as those above, however. For example, interaction in the classroom may prove more interesting for learners, but teachers have to assume greater responsibility. In the traditional view, as knowledge is supposed to be located between book covers, reliance on the text reduces teacher responsibility. If foreign teachers who favor innovative approaches go to institutions that value traditional educational principles and practices, they may encounter considerable resistance and resentment. If innovative methods are carried out with too much success, some of their teaching colleagues may become jealous.

On the other hand, learners sometimes may resent the introduction of innovative approaches to language study. For example, the use of standardized examinations characterizes most Chinese schools. When students face crucial exams, they probably expect class instruction that has been specifically designed to help them score highly on the standardized tests. At this point, the foreign teacher's values system may clash with the values system of the host institution and its students.

Third, as writing is perceived as foreign to men and women, to younger and older students, and to English majors and non-English majors, any learning or teaching principle or practice that is considered appropriate for beginning language learners merits the attention of writing teachers. Teacher sensitivity is especially critical in this area, for students may be superior readers, advanced speakers, and/or competent listeners and yet be novice writers. Because most learners in this study report feeling least confident and comfortable writing but most confident and comfortable reading, teachers may want to explore ways to combine reading activities with writing exercises. As many students call for interaction among the four English skills, teachers may plan for students to discuss in class the topics and themes they have been reading and writing about. In this way, each of the four skills complements and supplements the other.

Conclusion

The research reported on was designed in an effort to learn how contemporary Chinese college students view the world of cultural values, how they view the world of English-language learning and teaching. If student diversity and complexity have been illuminated, the survey instrument will have served its purpose well.

One principle underlying this research is that teachers and curriculum designers should ask students what they think about language learning and teaching, and should pay attention to students' answers. The principle can be applied in any country, in any context.

A second principle underlying this research is that informed learning and teaching must be based on rich data from both learners and teachers. Both quantitative and qualitative data, both general and individual aspects of language study, both close-ended and open-ended research instruments can enrich research, can enrich language learning and teaching, can enrich theory and practice. Multiple perceptions give singular insight.

Preferences and Pet Peeves of Chinese College Students

Descriptive analyses, t-tests, and chi-square procedures carried out in 1988 and 1989 through a two-part descriptive survey of student cultural values and attitudes toward English-language learning and teaching in China demonstrate that males and females, younger and older students, English majors and non-English majors do—quite literally—inhabit different perceptual worlds. The impact of such student diversity and complexity upon classroom activities, teaching methods, materials development, and testing procedures is discussed. Teachers are encouraged to carry out similar classroom research in different classroom contexts.

Excerpt from the Chinese Values Survey*

- () 三十三 安份守己
- () 三十四 保守
- () 三十五 要面子
- () 三十六 知己之交
- () 三十七 贞洁

* Chinese Culture Connection

Excerpt from the Garrott Questionnaire

Answer clearly and thoughtfully, in Chinese or in English.
请用中文或英文认真、清晰地回答以下问题。

- (2) In which aspect of English — reading, writing, listening and speaking — do you feel most confident and comfortable?
在阅读、写作、听力和会话方面,你感到哪一项学起来最得心应手?
- (6) As you think back over your English study time, which teacher-directed activities have you found most helpful?
在学习英语的过程中,你认为老师使用的哪一种方法对你最有帮助?

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(For readers' information)

1. 孝 (服從父母，尊敬父母，尊崇祖先，贍養父母)
Filial piety (Obedience to parents, respect for parents, honouring of ancestors, financial support of parents).
2. 勤勞 Industry (Working hard).
3. 容忍 Tolerance of others.
4. 隨和 Harmony with others.
5. 謙虛 Humbleness.
6. 忠於上司 Loyalty to superiors.
7. 禮儀 Observation of rites and social rituals.
8. 禮尚往來 Reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts.
9. 仁愛 (恕，人情) Kindness (Forgiveness, compassion).
10. 學識 (教育) Knowledge (Education).
11. 團結 Solidarity with others.
12. 中庸之道 Moderation, following the middle way.
13. 修養 Self-cultivation.
14. 尊卑有序 Ordering relationships by status and observing this order.
15. 正義感 Sense of righteousness.
16. 恩威並施 Benevolent authority.
17. 不重競爭 Non-competitiveness.
18. 穩重 Personal steadiness and stability.
19. 廉潔 Resistance to corruption.
20. 愛國 Patriotism.
21. 誠懇 Sincerity.
22. 清高 Keeping oneself disinterested and pure.
23. 儉 Thrift.
24. 耐力 (毅力) Persistence (Perseverance).
25. 耐心 Patience.
26. 報恩與報仇 Repayment of both the good or the evil that another person has caused you.
27. 文化優越感 A sense of cultural superiority.
28. 適應環境 Adaptability.
29. 小心 (慎) Prudence (Carefulness).
30. 信用 Trustworthiness.
31. 知恥 Having a sense of shame.
32. 有禮貌 Courtesy.
33. 安份守己 Contentedness with one's position in life.
34. 保守 Being conservation.
35. 要面子 Protecting your "face".
36. 知己之交 A close, intimate friend.
37. 貞潔 Chastity in women.
38. 寡欲 Having few desires.
39. 尊敬傳統 Respect for tradition.
40. 財富 Wealth.

Chinese Culture Connection

Appendix B.1

Needs Assessment Survey of Chinese Students of English
对学习 英语 的 中国 学生 的 需求 评估 的 调查

Answer clearly and thoughtfully, in Chinese or in English.
请用 中文 或 英文 认真、清晰 地 回答 以下 问题。

Name of researching teacher,

调 查 教 师:

June Rose Garrett

高 美 华

Name of cooperating teacher,

合 作 教 师:

Date of survey,

调 查 日 期:

Name and location of school,

学 校 名 称 和 地 址:

Student Information

学 生 情 况

Home Province,

出 生 地 点:

Grade,

年 级:

Age,

年 龄:

Sex, Female ☐ 女 ☐性别: Male ☐ 男 ☐

Major Field of Study,

专 业:

(1) How long have you been studying English in a school setting?

你 在 学 校 学 习 了 多 长 时 间 的 英 语?

(2) In which aspect of English — reading, writing, listening and speaking — do you feel most confident and comfortable?

在 阅 读、写 作、听 力 和 会 话 方 面，你 感 到 哪 一 项 学 起 来 最 得 心 应 手?

(3) In which aspect of English — reading, writing, listening and speaking — do you feel least confident and comfortable?

在 阅 读、写 作、听 力 和 会 话 方 面，你 感 到 哪 一 项 学 起 来 最 乏 味?

Appendix B.2

- (4) As you think back over your English study time, which study methods of your own have you found to be most effective?
在学习英语的过程中, 你认为你使用的哪一种方法对自己最有效?
- (5) What study methods of your own have been least effective?
哪一种方法对你自己最没有效果?
- (6) As you think back over your English study time, which teacher-directed activities have you found most helpful?
在学习英语的过程中, 你认为老师使用的哪一种方法对你最有帮助?
- (7) What opportunities have you had to use English outside of the classroom setting?
除课堂以外, 你都有过哪些使用英语的机会?
- (8) How do you plan to use English after you complete formal study?
正规学习结束以后, 你打算如何使用英语?
- (9) What do you see as the greatest needed improvement for English-study programs for Chinese students?
对中国学生来说, 你认为英语教学中哪一方面最需要改进?